## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1      1.      (Previously Presented) A computer implemented method:

2      estimating an expected component surplus, wherein said estimating comprises

3      identifying a plurality of components required to produce a product;

4      defining a vector of connect rates for the components;

5      defining an uncancelable level for each of the components, each of the
6      uncancelable levels defining a quantity of the each of the components below
7      which the quantity of the each of the components cannot be liquidated without
8      incurring a charge;

9      assuming that a selected one of the components is available at least at an
10      uncancelable level of the uncancelable levels corresponding to the selected one of
11      the components; and

12      computing the expected component surplus for the selected component using a
13      mean production for the product, the uncancelable level and the vector of connect
14      rates, wherein

15      the computing is performed by a computer.

1      2.      (Previously Presented) The computer implemented method of claim 1, the

2      estimating further comprising:

3      defining a planned level for the each of the components, each of the planned levels

4      defining a quantity at which a corresponding one of the components is expected to

5      be available.

1      3.      (Previously Presented) The computer implemented method of claim 2, the

2      estimating further comprising:

3      assuming that each of the remaining ones of the components is available at the planned

4      level corresponding to the each of the remaining ones of the components, wherein

5      the remaining ones of the components are ones of the components other than the

6      selected one of the components.

1        4.      (Previously Presented)  The computer implemented method of claim 3, the

2    estimating further comprising:

3        using the planned levels in the computing the expected component surplus.


1        5.      (Previously Presented)  The computer implemented method of claim 4, the

2    estimating further comprising:

3        estimating the mean production for the product.


1        6 - 15. (Cancelled)